

# taking the next step



The Role of ND Vocational Rehabilitation Consulting & Services

Helping students  
with disabilities  
transition from high  
school to college  
and/or work

# Introduction

This booklet is intended to aid students, parents, educators, and others involved in the transition process to understand the role of Vocational Rehabilitation, or VR, in the transition process.

It is meant to address the key questions often posed to VR Consultants and to dispel many misperceptions people have about VR's role. Should you have any questions after you have read the booklet, please feel free to contact the VR office nearest you.

So, let's get started.

## What is Vocational Rehabilitation?

Vocational Rehabilitation, or VR, is an employment-focused program to help eligible students with disabilities either obtain or maintain employment that is within their capabilities.

VR's main purpose is to assist students upon graduation from high school or a General Equivalency Degree program. However, some services might begin during the junior or senior year of high school, in order to facilitate a smooth transition to post-secondary education or employment.



### \* A Note ...on transition from high school to post-secondary education

Transitioning from high school to post-secondary education will require the student to disclose his or her disability to access special accommodations.

The Individual Education Plan or 504 Plan **does not** follow the student to college. The VR Consultant can assist the student in advocating for the services they will need to be successful.

VR may also assist with services a student may need that are not provided by the institution, such as personal aid and devices.



### **\* A Note ...on transition from high school to work**

Students with disabilities who are transitioning from high school to a job in the community could receive training through Vocational Development or the Supported Employment Program. VR contracts with a provider to provide job development, placement and job coaching

to assist students in obtaining jobs and learning the new job duties. If long-term job coaching is needed to maintain employment, funding sources will be sought.

## **Who is eligible for VR services?**

Only students with a documented disability can be found eligible for regular VR services.

A student does not need to have an active Individual Education Plan, or IEP, to qualify for VR services. As long as a medical doctor or field professional, such as a psychologist, has documented a diagnosis and the records can be obtained, the student may be found eligible for VR services.

Diagnoses, such as a learning disability in reading comprehension, mild mental retardation, diabetes, and cerebral palsy, are only a few of many that can lead to eligibility for VR services.

## **a student:**

- needs to have a medical or psychological diagnosis documented by a professional in the field.
- needs to have a disability that keeps the student from either obtaining employment or satisfactorily performing job duties.
- needs to require VR services to prepare for, enter into, engage in, or retain gainful employment.



## **What VR services are there?**

Services are individualized to the person's situation.

*What is provided for one person who is determined eligible and receiving VR services may not be provided for the next person who is determined eligible for services.*

**Before VR purchases a particular service or item, all other resources need to be accessed.**

Services provided must be:

- individualized to the person, employment or disability
- jointly developed and agreed upon between the VR Consultant and student

- subject to a search of comparable sources for payment
- subject to an income-needs analysis

Services fall within **5** broad groupings:

1. Evaluations
2. Medical/Psychological Treatment
3. Adaptive Aids, Accommodations, and Assistive Technology
4. Training
5. Employment

## **Does VR conduct career counseling?**

In conjunction with ND school systems, VR provides vocational guidance and counseling to eligible high school students with disabilities. Students are involved in career exploration activities such as interest testing, labor market research and job shadowing. The effects of their disability are also considered when pinpointing possible career choices.

Vocational Guidance and Counseling takes place throughout the whole process and may include:

- interest testing
- examination of how a disability keeps one from working
- planning and implementing corrective strategies, and helping with adjustments with living and working with a disability

## **What is the Vocational Rehabilitation Process?**

**1** Complete an application: If the student is under the age of 18 or is not his/her own guardian, a parent or guardian must sign the application and any other VR paperwork, such as releases of information

**2** Meet the assigned VR Consultant in your regional office and talk about the disability and work-related issues.

- 3** Your VR Consultant has 60 days to gather necessary information and make a determination of eligibility. A waiver can be signed if gathering of disability-related information takes longer than expected.

At this point in the VR process, a determination of eligibility is made and one of two things may happen:

***If the student is found eligible for VR services,***  
the process of Vocational Counseling and Guidance begins in order to develop an appropriate career objective based on factual information and the student's interests.

***If the student is not found eligible for VR services,***  
the case is closed and the student is directed to other possible resources.

## **What happens if a student is found eligible for VR services?**

A VR Consultant will consider the following issues when helping a student decide on an appropriate career objective:

- a student's present and potential skill level as measured through testing or demonstrated through past academic or job performance.
- work history similar to those of same-age peers.
- how the disability keeps the student from working or jeopardizes present employment
- what accommodations are needed (based on the disability) that would not already be provided in the natural setting, such as the school or the work place.


***Vocational Rehabilitation pays for some services of the overall plan and only when no other source is available.***

The goal of the IPE is for the student to obtain employment upon completion of training and/or other services specified in the plan.

After 90 days of satisfactory employment, the student is considered rehabilitated and able to self-advocate for future services and accommodations. The case is then closed.

## Can VR services be obtained after a case is closed?

## Talk with the VR Consultant.

 DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES  
VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION  
BHL 518 (Rev. 06-2002)

## **Is mediation available?**

If the student should disagree with the VR Consultant's decision, or they feel they are being treated unfairly during the VR process, contact should be made with the Client Assistance Program, or CAP.



CAP assists clients and client applicants of North Dakota VR services, Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation, or Independent Living services.

CAP may be reached at (1-800-207-6122) or visited at [www.state.nd.us/cap](http://www.state.nd.us/cap)

## **Is there a suggested VR time-line or checklist for the transition process in school?**

The following time-line is identified for a student's last two years of high school services, who may be eligible for VR services as a young adult. The time-line should allow students and their families to designate vocational service providers and become aware of options available for the post-high school years.

### **in the junior year**

- ✓ Invite VR Consultant to the Individual Education Plan, or IEP, meeting. At this time the most current interests of the student are shared and ideas are brainstormed as to what business opportunities are available within the area for job shadowing experiences.
- ✓ Student conducts self-directed IEP
- ✓ Participate in job shadows related to the student's interests.



- ✓ Work experience, if appropriate. Interest survey may be administered to assess career interests the student may have.
- ✓ Interest inventories such as CHOICES, high school career course planner, etc., to find out other possible career interests.
- ✓ Teacher collaborates with the VR Consultant to provide instruction and experience in writing cover letters, filling out applications, interview tips, and completing a resume that they can use in high school and upon graduation.
- ✓ College tours are done with their parents. VR may assist with the arrangements.
- ✓ Apply to VR if they plan to utilize the services of this agency. This is done in the spring of their junior year.

## **in the senior year**

- ✓ Job shadowing/work experience, if student has not yet made a career decision.
- ✓ College tours are done with their parents. VR may assist with the arrangements.
- ✓ Teacher collaborates with the VR Consultant to provide instruction and experience in writing cover letters, filling out applications, interview tips and completing a resume that they can use in high school and upon graduation.
- ✓ Invite the VR Consultant and possibly a representative of the Job Corps, if appropriate, to the final high school IEP meeting.

- ✓ The IEP meeting must assure that all the information necessary for each individual student has been presented and discussed in order to make the transition out of high school as successful as possible.
- ✓ Student conducts self-directed IEP
- ✓ For those students transitioning to college, compiling a packet (ex: transition portfolio) with information specific to their disability, including needed accommodations, is very important. It should include the current IEP, most recent evaluations, and any other career or college information.
- ✓ Apply to VR, if not already done, if they plan to utilize the services of this agency.



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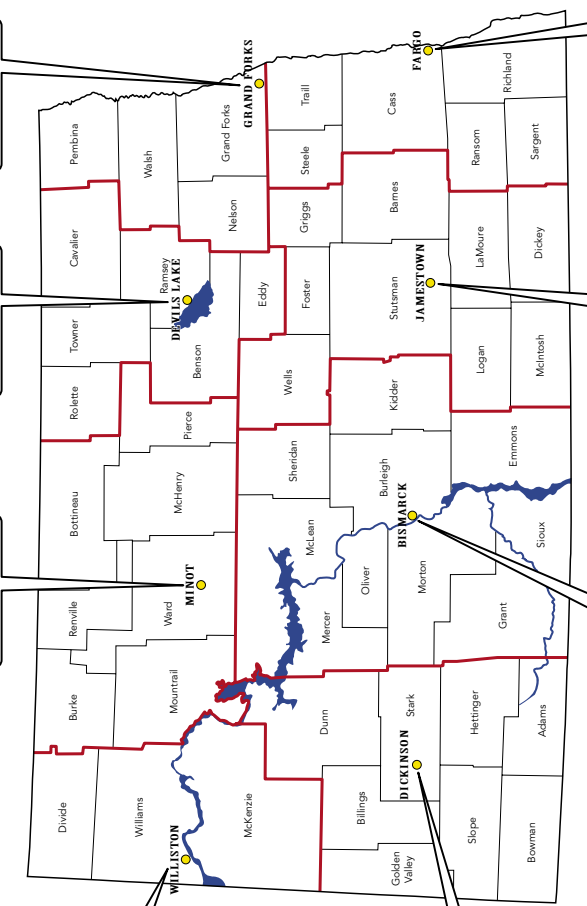
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▲ **For more information**  
contact VR by phone or online at  
[www.nd.gov/humanservices](http://www.nd.gov/humanservices)  
click on Business Services

